

COMPENSATED
EMANCIPATION

DRAWER 100

ADMINISTRATIVE
PROBLEMS

71.2009.025.04714



Slavery

Administrative Problems

Compensated Emancipation

Excerpts from newspapers and other sources

From the files of the
Lincoln Financial Foundation Collection

LINCOLN'S REJECTED MESSAGE

On February 5, 1865, President Lincoln formulated a message to Congress, proposing the payment of \$400,000,000 to the South as compensation for slaves lost by emancipation, and submitted it to his cabinet, only to be unanimously rejected.

Lincoln sadly accepted the decision, and filed away the manuscript message, together with this indorsement thereon, to which his signature was added: "February 5, 1865. Today these papers, which explain themselves, were drawn up and submitted to the cabinet and unanimously disapproved by them.

When the proposed message was disapproved, Lincoln soberly asked: "How long will the war last?"

To this none could make answer, and he added: "We are spending now, in carrying on the war, \$3,000,000 a day, which will amount to all this money, besides all the lives."

* * * * * 1521

National Republican

Lincoln Wanted to Pay.

Our hindsight is so much better than our foresight, as a rule, that the following statement just published, strikes us rather forcibly. It is well known that President Lincoln was strongly averse to bloodshed and anxious to see the war brought to a close as soon as possible. John P. Upshar, who was the President's secretary of the Interior, and is now a resident of Lawrence, Kan., says: "Soon after Lincoln's return from the James River conference in 1865, the cabinet was convened and he read to it for approval a message which he had prepared to be submitted to Congress in which he recommended that Congress appropriate \$300,000,000 to be apportioned among the several states in proportion to slave population to be distributed to holders of slaves in those states upon condition that they would consent to the abolition of slavery and the disbanding of the insurgent army, and would acknowledge and submit to the laws of the United States. The members of the Cabinet were all opposed. President Lincoln seemed somewhat surprised at that and asked: "How long will the war last?" No one answered, but he soon said: "A hundred days. Well we are spending now, in carrying on the war \$3,000,000 a day, which will amount to all this money besides all the lives." With a deep sigh, he added: "But you are all opposed to me and I will not send the message." Nov. 26, 1885.

J WR 1521

SUNDAY, MAY 23, 1926

LINCOLN'S LONG-HEADEDNESS.

In our Civil war, to have bought and freed the slaves would have cost much less than fighting about them, and the South instead of being ruined for years, would have built prosperity with the proceeds of the sale, but unfortunately it is in human nature to fight as long as you can, and settle on a common sense basis only when you must.—Arthur Brisbane.

President Lincoln proposed, in a special message to Congress dated March 6, 1862, to compensate the slaveholders who would voluntarily free their slaves, and in his second annual message he argued this proposition and urged it at length, earnestly and most eloquently. He felt that it was a sure way of saving the Union and bringing a permanent peace. But he appears to have been the only statesman of the time who had such a vision. Nothing was done about it. The war was fought to a conclusion, the cost was vastly greater than it would have been to purchase all the slaves, 300,000 lives were sacrificed and scars were left which never have been eradicated. We see now, that Lincoln's way would have been the cheapest and that it would have left good feeling. His was the longest head of the nation.

Perhaps, though, a Higher Power would not permit it. In his second inaugural address, that immortal document which is chiseled in raised letters upon one wall of the great Memorial at Washington, he makes a suggestion that may have come near the truth—the suggestion that all the wealth piled up by slaves should be sunk and each drop of blood drawn by the lash in all the long years of human slavery must be atoned for by blood drawn by the sword. America has been atoning for slavery through all the years since the war and she is not through yet. The heaviest punishment fell upon the South, but the North has not escaped.

LINCOLN LORE

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FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

July 12, 1937

LINCOLN'S APPEAL FOR COMPENSATED EMANCIPATION

Seventy-five years ago to-day, on July 12, 1862, Abraham Lincoln addressed an appeal to Representatives of the Border States which reveals how earnestly and consistently he tried to bring hostilities to a close even at the very beginning of the war. This anniversary day should cause an appreciative reaction of the message which appears in part in this bulletin.

The question of greatest importance which Lincoln discussed in his annual message to Congress in December, 1861, may be introduced by this excerpt: "I recommend that Congress provide for accepting such persons (slaves) from such states, according to some mode of valuation, in lieu, pro tanto, of direct taxes or upon some other plan to be agreed on with such states respectfully; that such persons, on such acceptance by the General Government, be at once deemed free." Lincoln thought of this plan as Compensated Emancipation.

It is doubtful, if in all our American History there have been many questions before a state legislature more important in determining the general trend of national affairs in a great crisis than the bill advocating Compensated Emancipation introduced in the Delaware Legislature in special session at Dover in February, 1862. When it finally reached the Senate, composed of nine members, four voted "aye" and four voted "no" and one was silent or absent. Had the legislature of New Jersey paved the way for other states to concur in the President's plan, the whole procedure of civil strife would have been changed.

Disappointed over the New Jersey episode and also over the failure of Congress to make any provisions for gradual Emancipation, Lincoln addressed his famous message of July 12, 1862, to the members of Congress of the Border States. Some excerpts from it follow:

"Gentlemen: After the adjournment of Congress, now very near, I shall have no opportunity of seeing you for several months. Believing that you of the border States hold more power for good than any other equal number of members, I feel it a duty which I cannot justifiably waive to make this appeal to you. I intend no reproach or complaint when I assure you that, in my opinion, if you all had voted for the resolution in the gradual-emancipation message of last March, the war would now be substantially ended. And the plan therein proposed is yet one of the most potent and swift means of ending it. Let the States which are in rebellion see definitely and certainly that in no event will the States you represent ever join their proposed confederacy, and they cannot much longer maintain the contest. But you cannot divest them of their hope to ultimately have you with them so long as you show a determination to perpetuate the institution within your own States. Beat them at elections, as you have overwhelmingly done, and nothing daunted, they still claim you as their own. You and I know what the lever of their power is. Break that lever before their faces, and they can shake you no more forever. Most of you have treated me with kindness and consideration, and I trust you will not now think I improperly touch what is exclusively your own, when, for the sake of the whole country, I ask, Can you, for your States, do better than to take the course I urge? Discarding punctilio and maxims adapted to more manageable times, and looking only to the unprecedently stern facts of our case, can you do better in any possible event? You prefer that the constitutional relation of the States to the nation shall be practically restored without disturbance of the institution; and if his were done, my whole duty in this respect, under the Constitution and my oath of office, would be

performed. But it is not done, and we are trying to accomplish it by war. The incidents of the war cannot be avoided. If the war continues long, as it must if the object be not sooner attained, the institution in your States will be extinguished by mere friction and abrasion —by the mere incidents of the war. It will be gone, and you will have nothing valuable in lieu of it. Much of its value is gone already. How much better for you and for your people to take the step which at once shortens the war and secures substantial compensation for that which is sure to be wholly lost in any other event! How much better to thus save the money which else we sink forever in the war! How much better to do it while we can, lest the war ere long render us pecuniarily unable to do it! How much better for you as seller, and the nation as buyer, to sell out and buy out that without which the war could never have been, than to sink both the thing to be sold and the price of it in cutting one another's throats? I do not speak of emancipation at once, but of a decision at once to emancipate gradually

"I have again begged your attention to the message of March last. Before leaving the capital, consider and discuss it among yourselves. You are patriots and statesmen, and as such I pray you consider this proposition, and at the least commend it to the consideration of your States and people. As you would perpetuate popular government for the best people in the world, I beseech you that you do in no wise omit this. Our common country is in great peril, demanding the loftiest views and boldest action to bring it speedy relief. Once relieved, its form of government, is saved to the world, its beloved history and cherished memories are vindicated, and its happy future fully assured and rendered inconcievably grand. To you, more than to any others, the privilege is given to assure that happiness and swell that grandeur, and to link your own names therewith forever."

Two days after the foregoing appeal on July 14, 1862, Lincoln sent a special message to Congress in which he introduced this bill embodying his plan for compensating the various States for the loss of slaves by emancipation which likely would have terminated the war and brought economic relief to the South:

"Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, That whenever the President of the United States shall be satisfied that any State shall have lawfully abolished slavery within and throughout such State, either immediately or gradually, it shall be the duty of the President, assisted by the Secretary of the Treasury, to prepare and deliver to such State an amount of six per cent interest-bearing bonds of the United States equal to the aggregate value, at _____ dollars per head, of all the slaves within such State as reported by the census of the year one thousand, eight hundred and sixty; the whole amount for any one State to be delivered at once if the abolition be immediate, or in equal annual installments if it be gradual, interest to begin running on each bond at the time of its delivery, and not before.

"And be it further enacted, That if any State, having so received any such bonds, shall at any time afterward by law reintroduce or tolerate slavery within its limits, contrary to the act of abolition upon which such bonds shall have been received, said bonds so received by said State shall at once be null and void, in whosesoever hands they may be, and such State shall refund to the United States all interest which may have been paid on such bonds."

NOTE—See Lincoln Lore No. 120 for further discussion of compensated Emancipation.

March 21st, 1956

Clerk Muffs \$64,000 Query

NEW YORK (AP)—Robert Edward Bennett, 48-year-old store clerk of Kingsland, Ga., has failed in a bid for the grand prize on The \$6,000 Question.

He thereby loses his winnings of \$32,000 pile up over the weeks by answering questions about Abraham Lincoln on the CBS television show. He'll receive a Cad-

illac as a consolation prize. Bennett lost out on the program last night by now knowing how much Lincoln offered to compensate the states per slave for voluntary emancipation.

He guessed \$2,000. Ralph Newman, proprietor of the Abraham Lincoln Bookshop in Chicago, who was serving as Bennett's expert adviser, said he thought the offer was closer to \$1,600.

Master of ceremonies Hal March said \$400 was the figure. Bennett was the first contestant on the show to gamble for the grand prize and lose. Three have won the \$64,000 prize.





Lincoln Lore

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Number 1664

The Troublesome Border States: Two Previously Unpublished Lincoln Documents

The Lincoln Library and Museum is proud to announce the acquisition of two previously unpublished endorsements by Abraham Lincoln. Both concern Border States, and together they suggest a policy pursued by the Lincoln administration

in the first year of the Civil War. Both letters of recommendation were written on the same day, but Lincoln acted on them at different times.



FIGURE 1. This strongly worded piece of 1864 campaign literature exaggerated the success of Northern armies in the war by exaggerating the amount of "Territory held by the Rebels when they fired on SUMTER." All of the gray and black areas allegedly belonged to the Confederates in 1861. The map serves well to indicate the importance of the larger Border States and documents the common assumption, North and South, that the Border States were more Southern than Northern in spirit.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

The Letters

House of Rep.
Jany 9. 1861. [1862]

To the President of the U. S.

Dr Sir

Maj Wallen of the U. States Army has seen much service. He is a Southern man, by birth and has faithfully adhered to his allegiance amid the treason of his Southern associates of the army & I hope his fidelity may be rewarded, by honorable promotion. We have but few Southern Born men in the service,

Very resply your frined [sic]
C A Wickliff

I sincerely wish Major Wallen could be relieved from going to New-Mexico—

A. Lincoln

Jan. 20. 1862.

House of Representatives.
Washington City Jan'y 9th 1862.

To His Excellency

A. Lincoln, President U. S.

Sir,

Permit us to recommend to you for appointment, as a Major in one of the new Regiments of the Regular Army, Major Thomas E Noell of Missouri. We desire to say in reference to Major Noell, that he is a gentleman of the highest order of talent, with a liberal Education, and an unspotted character. Before the commencement of our present troubles, Major Noell, was engaged in the successful practice of the law, enjoying the confidence of the Courts, the Bar, and the whole community. Early in September, he enlisted as a private in the first Volunteer company, raised in South East Missouri, was made a first Lieutenant, and when enough Union State troops, were raised for a Battalion, he was unanimously chosen by the officers as Major, in which capacity he has served ever since. He has been in Camp with his men the whole time, acquired proficiency in the drill and by his energy skill and courage, has protected seven or eight counties, from the lawless depredations of the Secession hordes, of the Swamp region. We feel that Missouri is entitled to a respectable appointment, in the New Regiments of the Regular Army, and in Major Noell a Native born citizen of Missouri, we feel that we should be so represented, that our State would be honored, and the public service greatly promoted.

We confidently hope that our application for his appointment will be promptly granted.—

We remain Most Respectfully

Your Ob't Sev'ts
James S. Rollins
E. H. Norton
Thos. L. Price
R Wilson
Wm A Hall
Jno W Noell
J. H. Henderson

I have a personal acquaintance with Major Noel [1] and am confident that if he should receive an appointment in the army he will not only serve the country well but will distinguish himself in the service

H. R. Gamble
Gov. of Mo

Washington

Jan 27. 1862

Respectfully submitted to the War Department, with the remark that, while I know not if there be a vacant Majority, I shall be quite willing the applicant within recommended shall have it, especially as it is said Missouri has had no appointments in the new Regular Army.

A. Lincoln

Feb. 1, 1862.

[Docketing in another hand]
Major Thos E. Noell
Missouri
Major U. S. A.

Recommended by
The President
Hon F. P. Blair
" Jas. S. Rollins
Gov H. R. Gamble

1 Enclosure

Lincoln and the Border States

"I think to lose Kentucky is nearly the same as to lose the whole game," wrote President Lincoln to Orville Hickman Browning on September 22, 1861. "Kentucky gone," he continued, "we can not hold Missouri, nor, as I think, Maryland. These all against us, and the job on our hands is too large for us. We would as well consent to separation at once, including the surrender of this captiol."

As James A. Rawley has argued, these were not the sentimental musings of a son of the Border. There were hard population and geographical facts to back them up. The white population of the eleven Confederate states was 5,451,000. Kentucky's white population was 919,484; Missouri's was 1,063,489; and Maryland had 515,918 white inhabitants. The total for these three Border States alone was 2,498,891, or just under half the total population of the Confederacy. Despite a tremendous population differential between North and South (about 22 1/2 million to 5 1/2 million or to 8 3/4 million counting slaves), the South held on for four years and came close to European recognition, stalemate, and independence. With the differential at 20 million to 10 1/4 million (counting slaves), the results might have been very different. In fact, that 2:1 ratio is reminiscent of the old saw about population in America's *successful* revolution of 1776, in which a third of the population, estimated to be actively interested in the patriot cause, won independence for the whole nation from Britain.

Geographically, Kentucky was of great strategic importance. With the Ohio River as a northern boundary, the Confederacy would have had a "natural military frontier" from the Atlantic to the Missouri River. A Confederate Missouri would have made control of the Mississippi River, a key aspect of Northern strategy, much more difficult. Kentucky's sentimental influence was significant as well. Missouri had 100,000 citizens born in Kentucky; Illinois had 60,000 (including the President of the United States); Indiana had 68,000; Ohio had 15,000; and Iowa had 13,000.

Lincoln's policies towards Kentucky have been much studied and written about. He followed a policy of appointing loyal men to governmental positions in Kentucky, whether they were Republicans or not and whether they held slaves or not (most often they were not Republicans, for Kentucky's Republican party was tiny and feeble). For a brief period, he blinked at Kentucky's announced policy of neutrality which was surely as illegal as secession. He supplied arms to Union men in Kentucky secretly, and he avoided coercion of the state until the Confederates invaded it, thus placing the onus of firing the first shot in Kentucky on the Confederacy rather than the Union. This gave the North a great psychological advantage.

As Harry J. Carman and Reinhard H. Luthin point out in *Lincoln and the Patronage* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1943), much of the Lincoln administration's Kentucky patronage involved military commissions. They argue that he took care to fill the officeships with good Union men, but that

he tried to fill military appointments in Kentucky with men who had some connection with the state, that is, men who were Kentucky residents or who had been born in Kentucky. They could have added that he tried to cement Kentucky to the Union cause by making military appointments recommended by influential Kentuckians.

The point of C. A. Wickliffe's letter of recommendation for Major Wallen was that Lincoln must appoint Southern-born men to the United States Army, rather than that Kentucky must have only Southern-born officers operating within its borders. By 1862, then, Border State policy included efforts to tie their loyalties to the Union, not by leaving them alone, but by giving their region appointments in the United States Army.

Henry D. Wallen was not apparently a Kentuckian, however. When his son was appointed to West Point in 1862, he was listed as a Georgian. Wallen was a Regular Army captain when the war began and was serving on the Pacific coast. In the autumn of 1861, he was promoted to Major of the Seventh Infantry, but he had friends in high places and, as soon as he received his promotion, these friends were urging further promotion — to Inspector General or Brigadier General. President Lincoln wrote a memorandum as early as December 4, 1861, reminding himself that Wallen was being pushed for higher rank. On January 18, 1862, Senator John J. Crittenden of Kentucky, Senator Henry S. Lane of Indiana, Senator John P. Hale of Maine, and Senator James W. Nesmith of Oregon called on President Lincoln, begging him not to send Major Wallen to New Mexico. Lincoln then wrote a strongly worded recommendation to Secretary of War Stanton that he not be sent. Two days later, Lincoln endorsed Congressman Wickliffe's request on Wallen's behalf. On the same day that the Senators called on Major Wallen's behalf, Lincoln ordered "it to [be] definitely settled" that Henry D. Wallen, Jr., presumably the Major's son, be one of the ten at-large appointments to become a cadet at West Point. This request was obeyed, and young Wallen entered the United States Military Academy that year.

Major Wallen did not fare as well. He served for two years in New Mexico, fighting Indians and Confederate sympathizers in that far-off and rather inglorious sideshow to the great Civil War. Lincoln's wishes could be overridden. But the administration's "Southern strategy" was at work. Of the ten at-large appointments to West Point, four came from slave states.

Charles A. Wickliffe's influence with the administration would fade. Wickliffe (he spelled his name with an "e," but he went blind late in his life, and the approach of this condition may account for the bizarre spelling and handwriting in his letter) was born in Kentucky in 1788. He had served in Congress practically forty years before Lincoln received his recommendation for Major Wallen. He had been a Whig and served in John Tyler's Cabinet. During the Civil War, Wickliffe, a Union-loving moderate, became a leader of Unionist sentiment in Bowling Green, Kentucky. Joshua F. Speed recommended Wickliffe in May of 1861, as a safe recipient of the arms that were being distributed secretly in Kentucky to Union men. In the first year of the war, then, he was grouped with the likes of the Speed family, James Harlan, and Garrett Davis as a loyal bulwark in a shaky and doubtful state.

Loyalty to the Union "as it was" was as far as Wickliffe's loyalty extended, however. When President Lincoln began in the spring of 1862 to urge the Border States to adopt a plan of emancipation within their borders, he raised constitutional objections. By 1863, he was so alienated from the measures of the Lincoln administration that he became the nominee for Governor of Kentucky on the Peace Democratic platform,

which decried the Federal government's usurpations of Kentucky's constitutional liberties. In a rare letter to his wife, President Lincoln commented on Wickliffe's loss of the election to Unionist Democrat Thomas Bramlette: "Old Mr. Wickliffe got ugly, as you know, ran for Governor, and is terribly beaten."

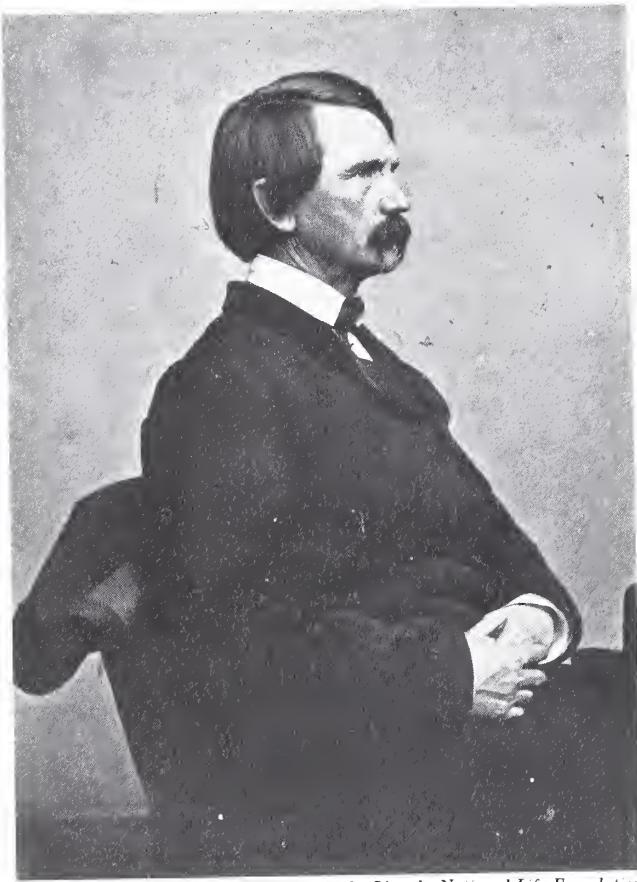
Wickliffe's career is proof of the wisdom of Lincoln's Border State policies. In the early months of the war, the President cooperated with even Democrats like Wickliffe as long as they sought to keep the Union together. Once Kentucky was safely in the Union fold, the inertia of constitutional boundaries and legalities kept her on the North's side despite the extreme unpopularity of emancipation within this slave-holding state. If a few strong-willed and independent old men like Wickliffe refused to change their principles, the state did not waver, and Wickliffe lost in a landslide. Had the Lincoln administration followed a policy of tampering with slavery from the start of the war, Kentucky, as Holman Hamilton has argued, would doubtless have seceded with Virginia and the rest of the upper South.

Two of the new appointments to the Military Academy hailed from Missouri, and the administration favored candidates for office championed by men from this Border State as well. Reinhard Luthin and Harry Carman argue that Missouri was firmly in the Union bag by August of 1861, and that Lincoln's patronage worries in that state thereafter stemmed from an enormous feud between conservative politicians of the Edward Bates, Francis P. Blair, and Hamilton R. Gamble stripe and more liberal politicians like John C. Frémont and B. Gratz Brown.

The Lincoln administration, as much by accident as anything else, was firmly the captive of the conservative faction. Edward Bates, who had been one of Lincoln's rivals for the Presidential nomination, became a Cabinet member, as did Lincoln's other major rival William H. Seward. Hamilton R. Gamble, the Governor of Missouri, was Bates's brother-in-law. Lincoln's Postmaster General was Montgomery Blair, who deserved inclusion in the first Republican President's Cabinet because of his important contributions to the founding of the party and because the Blair family in general represented the interests of Democrats who became Republicans. Francis P. Blair, Jr., was Montgomery's brother. Through his Cabinet, then, Lincoln had close ties to the one faction in Missouri. The other faction, identified for a time with the career and charisma of John C. Frémont, represented a rival Republican interest in the Presidency which Lincoln never succeeded in conciliating. Indeed, the only reason Frémont had a command in Missouri was that he had once been thick with the Blairs, and they persuaded Lincoln to appoint him. Later, Missouri proved to be too small for the ambitions of both Francis Blair and Frémont, and the two became bitter factional rivals.

Major Thomas E. Noell's name came before Lincoln with impeccable factional credentials. Hamilton R. Gamble and Francis Blair were leaders of the faction, as was Congressman James S. Rollins. More important than Noell's factional identification at this juncture in the war, at least from President Lincoln's point of view as opposed to that of the politicians within Missouri, was the simple fact that he came well recommended by a Border State delegation. This seems to have been persuasive, for on April 1, 1862, Thomas E. Noell became a captain in the Nineteenth Infantry, United States Army.

Thomas E. Noell was being recommended for promotion by his own father, John Noell, who was a member of the Missouri delegation in the House of Representatives. John Noell died in Washington in 1863, before his term ended. In 1864, his



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE 2. Francis P. Blair, Jr.

son resigned his commission and ran successfully for his father's former seat. Thomas Noell won reelection and, like his father, died in office.

Doubtless the word was out in Washington that a way to gain an appointment from the Lincoln administration was to represent a slave-state interest that could perhaps be won to the Union side. Lincoln noted in the case of Noell that the appointment was of special merit if it were true that there were no Missouri men in the new units of the Regular Army. Major Wallen, on the other hand, had influential friends all over the Union, but it is interesting to note that his friends followed up their pleas for saving his career from the obscurity of the New Mexico theater of war by having Kentuckian Charles Wickliffe urge the Major's cause on the ground that there were too few Southern-born men in the Army.

The story of the Border States always serves to impress us with the speed with which political events in the Civil War moved. Although it is fashionable to think that a policy of emancipation was arrived at at a snail's pace, the view from the Border suggest quite the opposite. One must keep in mind that slavery was an institution over two centuries old in a country that was fifteen years short of one century old. The United States was no nearer abolishing slavery on April 13, 1861, than it had been one, two, or three decades before. In fact, the chances of doing away with the peculiar institution without war were far slimmer in 1861 than in the first fifty years after the American Revolution. As Lincoln figured out and said repeatedly, as far as slavery was concerned there had been no progress, only decline, from the conditions of the early days of the republic. Recent studies of the economic health of the slave economy indicate that it was thriving, and its racial purpose never changed.

To look at the Civil War through a Kentucky prism is to see

events fairly hurtling past. If the Kentucky legislature had been sitting on April 14, when Sumter was fired upon, she might well have left the Union with the other four Southern states which did so for that reason. In May, Lincoln was smuggling guns into the state to any Democrat who seemed to want to keep Kentucky out of the Confederacy. The President ignored the state's illegal neutrality. By the Fourth of July, Lincoln attacked neutrality as showing "no fidelity to the Constitution," but he sent no Union troops to Kentucky. Even after Unionists won the August elections for a new state legislature, Lincoln kept only Kentucky soldiers in Kentucky. When John C. Frémont issued an emancipation order in Missouri on August 30, some Kentucky soldiers threw down their guns and went home. Within a week, the Confederates stupidly invaded Kentucky. The legislature then abandoned neutrality and took active measures to support the North.

In just a year from this time, Lincoln would identify his administration with a policy of emancipation. And he wasted very little time in broaching the subject to the slave-holding Border. In six months Lincoln was advising the Border States to get rid of slavery; he sugared the pill by offering compensation. Kentucky turned the offer down, and it was Kentucky Congressmen especially, among them Charles Wickliffe, who raised objections to the plan in a meeting of Border State Congressmen with Lincoln on March 10, 1862.

The price Lincoln paid was unpopularity. McClellan took Kentucky in a landslide in 1864, 61,000 to 26,000, and, as Holman Hamilton has said, in spirit Kentucky then joined the Confederacy. For practical military reasons, however, Lincoln's cautious early policy of giving the reluctant Border disproportionate attention paid off, and Missouri and Kentucky helped more than they hindered the effort to keep the nation from falling apart.



From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE 3. John C. Frémont



Lincoln Lore

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Number 1671

LINCOLN HISTORIOGRAPHY: NEWS AND NOTES

The best news in the field is that more Lincoln books are in the offing. Professor William Hanchett of San Diego State University has written eight chapters of a book on the assassination of President Lincoln. He has perhaps four more to write. He began the project as an extended essay on the historiography of the assassination but quickly discovered that he could not judge the historians without making up his own mind about the nature of the assassination conspiracy itself.

Thus began a long period of research in original sources, still under way. It took the efforts of his Congressman and other Washington friends to gain him access to the famed

John Wilkes Booth diary, and, says Professor Hanchett, it took practically a half hour to free the little book from the Ford's Theatre Museum security system. He has done extensive research in manuscript collections, and his book promises to be a balanced and sane corrective to the recent surfeit of sensationalist theorizing about America's first Presidential assassination.

Though we tend to think of it as primarily a European phenomenon, there is a long tradition of American politicians who have written books that were something other than memoirs of their terms in office. No one has combined

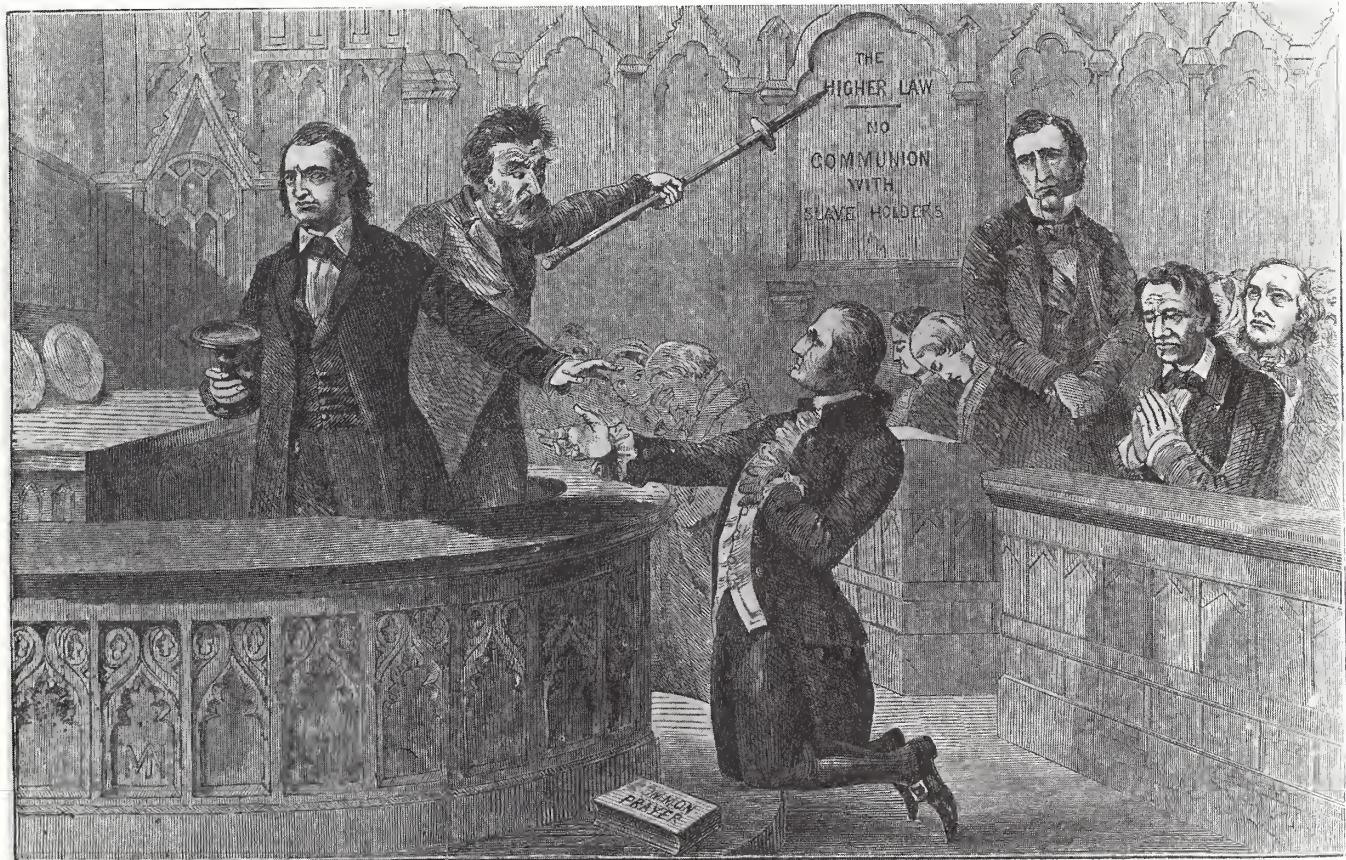


FIGURE 1. *Harper's Weekly* published this view of the secession crisis on March 2, 1861, just before President Lincoln delivered his inaugural address. The cartoon suggests that Northern self-righteousness rather than Southern intransigence was the cause of secession. Henry Ward Beecher refuses to give George Washington communion as Seward, Lincoln, and Greeley sit in the congregation in various attitudes of exaggerated piety. This was essentially the Democratic view of secession — that it was unnecessarily provoked by the sectional self-righteousness of the Republican party. To hold, as William Appleman Williams does, that Lincoln was an "imperialist" requires the same assumption that this cartoon had behind it, namely, that the South was taking the humble attitude of the supplicant like George Washington in the cartoon.

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

Thomas Jefferson's feat of contributing significantly to American letters with a work like *Notes on the State of Virginia*, on the one hand, and reaching the highest political office in the land, on the other. Still, Theodore Roosevelt's contributions to the history of Western America and Woodrow Wilson's scholarly contributions to political science and history should not be ignored.

The Lincoln field seems to be the last still to attract politicians as readily as historians. This tradition began with the recollections of politicians who knew Lincoln and reached great heights in the work of Indiana's Senator Albert Beveridge. This tradition is still alive. Congressman Paul Simon of Illinois, for example, wrote a book, *Lincoln's Preparation for Greatness: The Illinois Legislative Years* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1963), which changed our thinking on many of the points of Lincoln's early political career and improved upon the work of Beveridge. Now Representative Paul Findley of Illinois's Twentieth Congressional District is at work on a book on Lincoln's single term in the United States Congress. Lincoln's appeal, incidentally, is broad; Simon is a Democrat and Findley is a Republican.

James R. Mellon, III, moves from the field of anthropology to Lincoliana and photographic history with a promise of a work on the best photographs of Lincoln. He hopes that the book will serve a sort of "archival" purpose by presenting with the latest methods of photographic reproduction the very best print available of all the famous photographs of the Sixteenth President before they deteriorate any further. Viking Press, which recently published a book on Georgia O'Keefe much praised for the quality of its color plates, is to be the publisher.

There has not been a motion picture about Abraham Lincoln in years. The movie industry has changed, and so has the nature of popular interest in Lincoln's career. Just now, it is probably the assassination which provokes the widest curiosity. Sunn Classic Productions, Inc., is filming "Conspiracy to Kill President Lincoln" in Savannah, Georgia, where the famed program of historic restoration has produced a city which is an ideal backdrop for a film about nineteenth-century America. The film is scheduled for release this summer. Although it does not promise to be of the sane and balanced school I championed in the first paragraph, the film will use actors of established reputation. John Anderson, who played Lincoln in a television special which preceded Hal Holbrook's lengthier portrayal, is supposed to play the Sixteenth President again. Richard Basehart, who has had a hand in a couple of television specials about Lincoln, will portray John Wilkes Booth. Sunn Classic's specialty is promotion, and they promise to give the film a big advertising campaign after this spring.

Winfred Harbison, who contributed substantial work on Lincoln and the Republican party in Indiana in the 1930s, has urged me to deal with the portrayal of Lincoln in Peter J. Parish's new one-volume synthesis, *The American Civil War* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1975). It was good advice. Professor David Donald of Harvard University has said of Parish's book that "It would be hard to find a better one-volume history of the conflict," and he should know, for Donald himself is coauthor of the best one-volume work on the period by far—at least before the appearance of Parish's work.

Parish's is certainly the most elegantly written textbook imaginable, and it is full of quotable and pithy statements about Abraham Lincoln. Parish begins his treatment of the Emancipation Proclamation by suggesting that "a man may show political skill and shun sentimentality, without necessarily being either shamelessly opportunist or morally insensitive." He calls Lincoln "the arch exponent of the indirect approach to the slavery issue, the strategy of the 'soft sell.'" Parish has a particular gift for using the evidence of witnesses of Lincoln's career to great effect, and it is important to his appreciation of Lincoln that one understand the context: "Even Horace Greeley admitted that Lincoln was well ahead of the bulk of Northern opinion, and that there was probably a majority in the North against emancipation until mid-1863." Given this state of public opinion, "He took the low road to emancipation rather than the high. It was slower and more circuitous, but it was safer and it led to the same place." Again, the well-selected witness's quotation, this time from Boston businessman John Murray Forbes in a letter to Charles Sumner, makes Lincoln's course seem shrewd:

It seems to me very important that the ground of "military necessity" should be even more squarely taken than it was on 22d September. Many of our strongest Republicans, some even of our Lincoln electors, have constitutional scruples in regard to emancipation upon any other ground. . . .

I know that you and many others would like to have it done upon higher ground, but the main thing is to have it done strongly, and to have it so backed up by public opinion that it will strike the telling blow, at the rebellion and at slavery together, which we so much need.

I buy and eat my bread made from the flour raised by the hard-working farmer; it is certainly satisfactory that in so doing I am helping the farmer clothe his children, but my motive is self-preservation, not philanthropy or justice. Let the President free the slaves upon the same principle, and so state it that the masses of our people can easily understand it.

He will thus remove constitutional scruples from some, and will draw to himself the support of a very large class who do not want to expend their brothers and sons and money for the benefit of the negro, but who will be very glad to see Northern life and treasure saved by any practical measure, even if it does incidentally an act of justice and benevolence.

Now I would not by any means disclaim the higher motives, but where so much prejudice exists, I would eat my bread to sustain my life; I would take the one short, sure method of preserving the national life, — and say little about any other motive.

Parish clinches his argument by quoting Lincoln's explanation of his policy to British antislavery leader George Thompson, as reported by Francis B. Carpenter:

Many of my strongest supporters urged *Emancipation* before I thought it indispensable, and, I may say, before I thought the country ready for it. It is my conviction that, had the proclamation been issued even six months earlier than it was, the public sentiment would not have sustained it. . . . We have seen this great revolution in public sentiment slowly but surely progressing, so that, when final action came, the opposition was not strong enough to defeat the purpose.

Parish interprets Lincoln's early policies of gradual emancipation for the Border States and his lingering interest in colonization as having an "invaluable political and propaganda purpose":

If the gradual plan failed, it might still serve to assure conservatives that all else had been tried before the resort to more drastic measures, and to persuade radicals that the administration was moving in the right direction. If the colonization schemes failed, as they surely would, they would still serve to show the president's awareness of the fears of a Negro influx into the North, and his concern with the consequences of emancipation. Many Republicans, some more radical than Lincoln, had spoken in favour of colonization; a correspondent of Ben Wade had applauded his support for the idea: "I believe practically it is a damn humbug. But it will take with the people."

"Lincoln," says Parish in another memorable passage, "was at his best when appearing to bow to the inevitable while doing very much what he himself wished."

Parish's treatment of the election of 1864 is a little less sure handed. As a synthesis, his book can be no better than the best of the existing literature, and this election, unlike Lincoln's racial policies, has yet to receive adequate treatment. Certainly, he is correct in saying that the "1864 election was remarkable first in that it took place at all, and second in that it so much resembled other elections held before and after." The former judgment is getting to be commonplace (which is not to say that it is not true), but the latter lacks convincing proof in *The American Civil War*. He does make at least one original point about Lincoln's opponents within the Republican party: "Those who hoped to replace Lincoln were attracted by the tried and tested formula of nominating a military hero. Their problem was that the available military men in 1864 fell into two categories: generals like Grant who were wreathed in the laurels of victory but who resolutely refused to consider nomination, and those like Fremont or Ben Butler who were willing or anxious to be asked, but whose military record was scarcely untarnished." The "boom" for Salmon P. Chase,

then, was not a response to a popular clamor — the people and the hacks wanted a general — but a drive engineered from the top down. Parish does a nice job in “translation into plain English of the full-blown phrases” of the Republican platform, pointing to the real meaning of this gaseous platitude:

Resolved, That we deem it essential to the general welfare that harmony should prevail in the National Councils, and we regard as worthy of public confidence and official trust those only who cordially indorse the principles proclaimed in these resolutions, and which should characterize the administration of the government.

In other words, translates Parish, Lincoln should behead Montgomery Blair.

Parish is on the high road to contradiction when he begins a paragraph: “The experience of 1864 bears out the view that, in American presidential elections, the struggle within the parties is often at least as important as the struggle between them.” He then concludes the same paragraph by saying that “The rivals of 1864 offered the electorate a choice and not an echo.” The fact of the matter is that most of the existing literature is written from the former viewpoint, but the latter viewpoint seems more proper in light of the nature of the party conflicts preceding the election of 1864. Attracted to the latter conclusion, Parish is nonetheless limited to the evidence for the former case — hence, his embarrassment. This is, however, an understandable blemish in an otherwise excellent book. Professor Parish lectures on American history at the University of Glasgow and joins that tradition of great British scholars who have on occasion understood American history better than the Americans themselves have.

In the course of studying Lincoln’s ideas about expansion in his term as Congressman during the Mexican War, I was led to William Appleman Williams’s book, *America Confronts a Revolutionary World: 1776-1976* (New York: William Morrow, 1976). This little volume “celebrates” the Bicentennial from the perspective of the New Left, a term which as the years fly by is becoming inapplicable but which has not yet been retired from use and replaced. Professor Williams, who is primarily a student of American foreign policy, is one of those radicals who hate liberals more than they hate conservatives. In American history, then, Professor Williams dislikes Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt and speaks, on the other hand, with a sort of nostalgic fondness of Herbert Hoover.

Williams hates Lincoln. He does not quite fall into that queer trap into which some American Marxists have fallen of admiration of the slave South because it was pre-capitalist and provided one of the very rare examples of a non-capitalist society in the United States. But he does have enough of the radical’s tendency to admire people for the enemies they make to argue that the South should have been allowed to leave in peace after — a curious concern for a radical — a convention authorized secession and “pegged” Federal property in the South at a fair price to be paid for over time (John Minor Bott’s suggestion). Lincoln thus becomes for Williams what he hates the most, an imperialist and a precursor of Woodrow Wilson and Franklin Delano Roosevelt. Wilson, says Williams, “would do for the world what Lincoln had done for America.” Again, in the case of World War II, “in the narrow military sense, as with Lincoln and Wilson, Roosevelt carried his crusade to a victorious conclusion.”

The Lincoln who emerges from Williams’s pages, then, is a curious figure drawn as a monolith, though the commonest conclusion of any book on Lincoln these days is that he grew. He is terrifyingly ambitious (“Lincoln ultimately achieved his ambition to displace Washington as the Father of the Country”), and he is pictured as “hacking out his trail to the White House.” Williams ignores Lincoln’s periods of vacillation, doubt, and uncertainty about his career (politics, law, business, surveying), about his marriage (could a “penniless” piece of “floating driftwood” support a high-minded woman in a town where people “flourished” about in carriages?), and about politics (he claimed to have been losing interest in politics between 1849 and 1854). Lincoln is also depicted as “full of missionary zeal to globalize the American solution to life.” “Put simply,” adds Williams, “the cause of the Civil War was the refusal of Lincoln and other northerners to honor the revolutionary right of self-determination — the touchstone of the American Revolution.” The House Divided speech “was the ultimate appeal to the genius of Madison: expand or die.

Hence if we keep you from expanding you will die.” Lincoln “wanted to transcend the Founding Fathers, free the slaves, and expand America’s power throughout the world.”

These are the slashing strokes of the essayist as quick portrait painter, and they have a surface plausibility rooted in the echoing of familiar phrases. By accident, some of these phrases are quite familiar. For years, I have assigned as a favorite topic for student essays a detailed analysis of Madison’s *Federalist* Paper Number 10. And for years, I have been correcting a freshman misreading of that famous document. Madison says, “Extend the sphere and you take in a greater variety of parties and interests; you make it less probable that a majority of the whole will have a common motive to invade the rights of other citizens; or if such a common motive exists, it will be more difficult for all who feel it to discover their own strength and to act in unison with each other.” He is completing a syllogism not making a statement of foreign policy. He precedes the statement with a description of the consequences of narrower boundaries (“The smaller the society . . . the more frequently will a majority be found of the same party . . .”). The point of *Federalist* Number 10 is to convince people who think the proposed United States already too large that it is in fact all the better for its great size. Certainly, the savvy Madison was not going to convince the timid and cautious by urging a policy of greater extension of territory. Madison’s political hero was Thomas Jefferson, who, though he had a tremendous interest in expansion, in fact thought that some of the possible expanded areas (Oregon, for example) would break off to form separate republics on the American model. This may be expanding the power of the United States, but it is not expanding it at the expense of self-determination. Madison’s message was not expansion and imperialism, and neither was Lincoln’s.

This is the best example to show the real fault of Williams’s work; he reads things out of context. When he describes Seward as “a persistent and by no means wholly defeated rival for supreme power,” Williams has smuggled the Imperial Presidency of the twentieth-century United States into the nineteenth century, when the Presidency could be conceived of (as it was by Zachary Taylor and Ulysses S. Grant, for example) as an office which merely enforced the Congressional will, a sort of vice-Congress. The flounderings of a feeble republic protected only by geography and still widely regarded as a dangerous “experiment” are also very different matters from the purposeful policies of a giant power.

A lively writing style on occasion masks historical imprecision, as is the case in Williams’s discussion of Texas annexation and the Mexican War:

... the antislavery people, along with the abolitionists, posed the specter of secession — or war — if Texas was acquired. Lincoln was not the only one who read it right. But Calhoun disdained to play Illinois games, and laid it out on the table: “It is easy to see the end. . . . We must become two people.”

It is hard because of the imprecise style to tell exactly what “Lincoln . . . read it right” means here. However, not any of the possible meanings in the context can be true. Lincoln did not take the view of expansion that abolitionists did. He said bluntly in 1848 that he “did not believe with many of his fellow citizens that this war was originated for the purpose of extending slave territory.” He did not even perceive Texas annexation as a national problem, telling Liberty man Williamson Durley that “Liberty men . . . have viewed annexation as a much greater evil than I ever did.” In fact he “never was much interested in the Texas question.” This points up two things: (1) Lincoln was not a clear-eyed imperialist squinting towards United States power at all times, and (2) imperialism was not the issue in the mid-nineteenth century that it became at and after the end of the century. Lincoln’s indifference is thus the most effective answer to Williams; Williams is wrong about which side of the issue Lincoln stood on and unhistorical in his own concern about the issue. Williams’s ignorance of this period of Lincoln’s life is proven, and we need not, therefore, linger over this idle and sneering speculation:

... given his later maneuver around Fort Sumter, one cannot avoid the thought that he learned from Polk how to act in a way that would start a war while shifting the blame to one’s opponent. On the other hand, he may not have needed any instruction in such matters.

In the end, Williams draws a portrait of Lincoln which closely resembles the picture the opposition party drew during the Civil War. Of course, the Democrats' concern was not imperialism, but they drew Lincoln as a "ruthless" and "arrogant" (Williams's terms) potential dictator who rode roughshod over precious civil liberties. They had such disdain for him, however, that they could never respect his personality and drew quite another picture of him as a vague and wishy-washy puffedogger. Williams calls him "a Houdini with words" whose First Inaugural Address was "Hair splitting instead of rail splitting." He was "feeble," and "he lacked the courage to take his chances."

The ultimate conclusion is that President Lincoln "steered a counterrevolutionary course." But, as Peter Parish points out, Karl Marx — who knew a revolution when he saw one — came to quite a different conclusion in a letter to Engels:

The fury with which Southerners have received Lincoln's Acts proves their importance. All Lincoln's Acts appear like the mean puffedogging conditions which one lawyer puts to his opposing lawyer. But this does not alter their historic content . . . The events over there are a world upheaval, nevertheless.

In a very different kind of book, C. Peter Ripley makes some interesting observations about Lincoln's reconstruction policies. *Slaves and Freedmen in Civil War Louisiana* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1977) is a scholarly monograph based on extensive research in unpublished manuscripts. It is not easy reading, but it does present an interesting picture of politics and social life in a state about which President Lincoln came to care a great deal. Ripley argues that Lincoln's policies were on the whole and, especially in the end, conservative. When General Benjamin F. Butler failed to help escaped slaves even to the extent Congress allowed before the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln endorsed his policies by tolerating them. General Butler, often pictured as a ruthless radical, emerges from Ripley's book as a rather cautious man who feared emancipation. To Salmon Chase on July 10, 1862, he wrote, "I shall treat the negro with as much tenderness as possible, but I assure you it is quite impossible to free them here and now without a San Domingo. There is no doubt that an insurrection is only prevented by our bayonets." This was no political ploy; he wrote his wife just fifteen days later, "We shall have a negro insurrection here I fancy." The man who invented the idea of "contraband" as a cloak for escaping slavery came to discourage runaways from entering his lines. He welcomed only fugitives who could work; he paid these rations but no wages, even though Congress had authorized payment of wages. He did not give rations to runaways outside his lines, though that also was legal. He allowed masters who took the loyalty oath to retrieve their escaped property.

Later, in late 1863, Lincoln pulled the rug from under the state's radical movement and supported a moderate-conservative faction, even though he had given the radicals support earlier in the year. Finding the reason for Lincoln's actions is complicated by the identification of the radical faction with the Treasury Department and Salmon P. Chase, who was emerging as a rival for the Presidential nomination in the fall of 1863. Ripley avoids speculation about Lincoln's motives and usually opts for describing the effects of Lincoln's action or inaction on Louisiana politics. This is a bit disappointing from the perspective of the Lincoln field and makes it unfair to draw a conclusion about his motive after all (that he was conservative). Still, the Louisiana side of the administration's problems is interesting and enriches our understanding of the context in which President Lincoln operated.

Another interesting look at the context of Lincoln's actions from the perspective of a single state and, in this case, a single party is Eric J. Cardinal's article, "The Ohio Democracy and the Crisis of Disunion, 1860-1861," *Ohio History*, LXXXVI (Winter, 1977), 19-40. Cardinal attempts to resurrect the reputation of the Democratic party. The party "lost" the war as much as the South did, for its ideal was the restoration of the Union, "the Federal Union as it was forty years ago," in the words of Clement Vallandigham. Lincoln's historical reputation has been good enough to hurt that of anyone who opposed him, and the Democrats did. And, "the racism inherent in the Democratic ideology has made it morally unattractive to modern scholars."

Cardinal argues that the Democrats should be awarded at least the virtue of consistency. As "the shattering events which accompanied the election of Lincoln pushed the United States over the precipice of sectional bitterness into civil war, the northern Democracy — more than any other political group — stood unwaveringly for the preservation of the Union . . . They recognized neither the right of secession nor that of coercion, and this remained the heart of their problem throughout the war. Moreover, northern Democrats first articulated positions concerning secession and civil war during this early period which, with few modifications, they maintained throughout the conflict."

Posing as the only true and steady advocates of Union, the Democracy claimed no responsibility for war and blamed Southern disunionists and Northern Republicans — not in that order. In fact, their persistence in blaming the Republicans in wartime for the war came to look a lot like treason to Republicans. Partisanship fed their belief that agitation of the slavery question rather than the peculiar institution itself caused the country's problems. Their answer to the crisis was compromise rather than coercion. Despite strong identification with and support of Douglas before the election, the Democracy united quickly on the idea of compromise with a South which had walked out on Douglas at the recent Charleston convention. The party's cohesion, as seen in votes in the Ohio legislature on key roll calls dealing with the national crisis, was much higher than that of the Republicans. Sumter brought immediate support for the Northern war effort, but "Democrats quickly made it clear that they supported the war effort expressly to restore the Federal Union; not to abolish slavery." Cardinal concludes carefully, "Democratic support for the war at its outset, then, may be characterized as willing, but conditional."

Cardinal is at work on a dissertation examining the experience of the Ohio Democracy throughout the war years. We all look forward to the completion of the project. There is much to be learned about the Democratic party in this period.

Harold Holzer continues to contribute his interesting pieces for Lincoln collectors. *Americana*, V (March, 1977), contains an article which pleads a believable case for "Collecting Print Portraits of Abraham Lincoln." *The Antique Trader* for February 9, 1977, contains Holzer's amusing article, "What Lincoln Touched: Intimate Souvenirs of an American Life" (pages 40-45) and "A Picture's Worth . . . 'Lincoln Mailbag'" on page 47. Holzer's "Print Portraits of a Martyr, Lincoln in Death: Bigger Than Life" appears in *Hobbies*, LXXXII (April, 1977).

American Heritage, XXVIII (February, 1977), contains a brief spread on actors' portrayals of Lincoln, called "Say, who's that tall, homely feller in the stovepipe hat?" There is a solid and accurate chapter on Lincoln by John A. Carpenter in *Power and the Presidency* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976).



FRANK LESLIE'S ILLUSTRATED NEWSPAPER
MIGHTY PARTICULAR.
'TIS MY DUTY TO DRIVE IT AS WELL AS I CAN.'

From the Lincoln National Life Foundation

FIGURE 2. Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper stressed the differences within the Democratic party in this cartoon published on October 1, 1864. George McClellan, the Democratic nominee for President, refuses to drive the miserable one-horse shay rigged up by Clement Vallandigham and the peace wing of the party.



Lincoln Lore

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LAWANDA COX ON RECONSTRUCTION IN LOUISIANA: A REVIEW

President Lincoln's attempt to reconstruct Louisiana has been the focus of a tremendous amount of attention in recent years. It has provided the exclusive subject matter of two major books in the last three years: Peyton McCrary's *Abraham Lincoln and Reconstruction: The Louisiana Experiment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) and LaWanda Cox's *Lincoln and Black Freedom: A Study in Presidential Leadership* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1981). Other historians have given it considerable notice in books, articles, and scholarly papers of broader focus. Reconstruction in Louisiana is a hot topic these days.

The attraction lies not so much in swampy Louisiana itself as in the subject of Reconstruction, for Lincoln made Louisiana a sort of model of his policy toward the conquered South. Interest in Reconstruction is high for three principal reasons. First, scholars, jurists, reformers, and policy makers have been look-

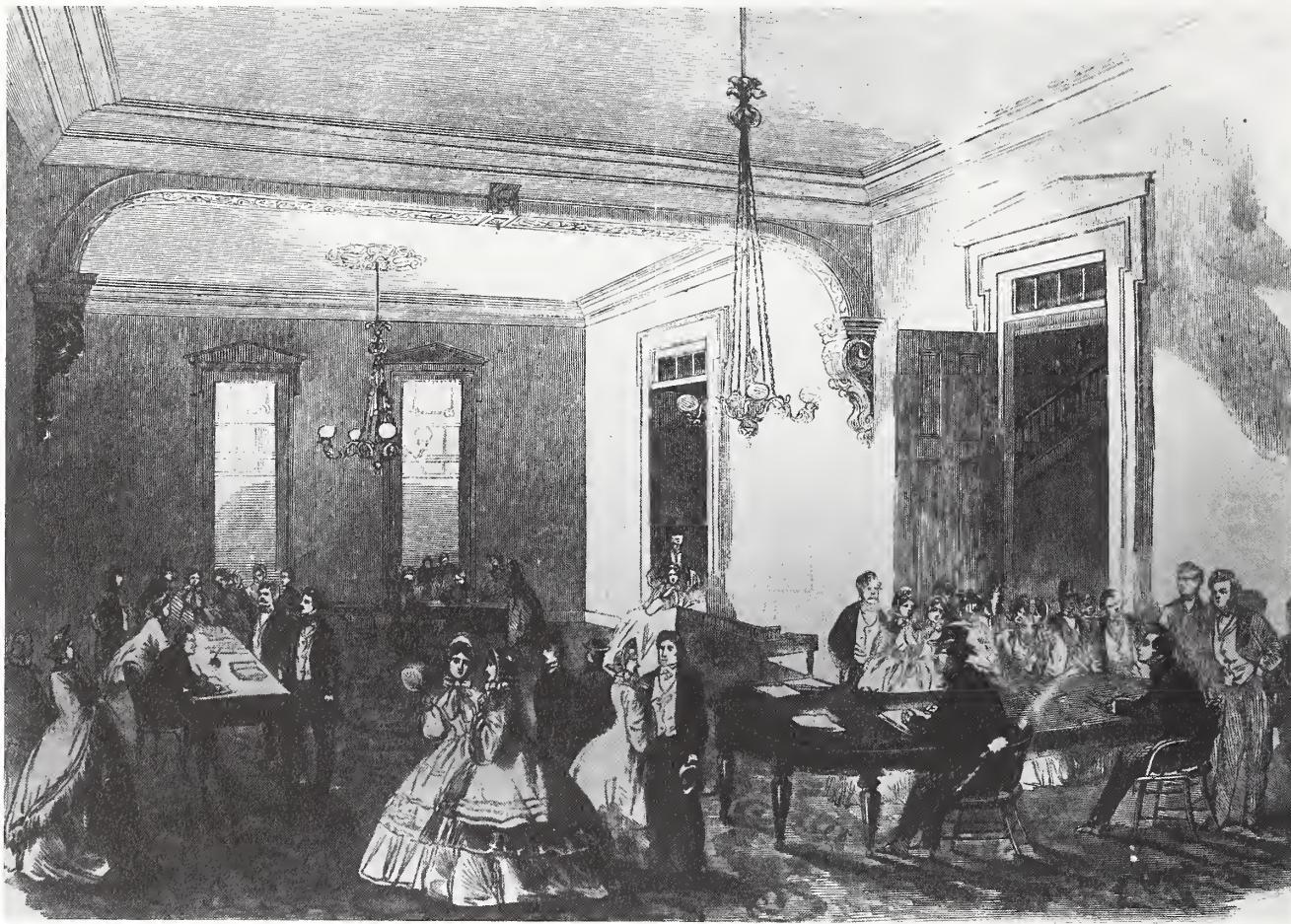
ing for precedents set in the 1860s and 1870s for the modern movement for civil rights for black people a century later. Indeed, the measures of the modern era are sometimes called the Second Reconstruction. That initial impulse to study the first Reconstruction is well on the wane, but scholars trained in graduate schools in the 1960s did their initial work on Reconstruction and continue to work in the field even though many reformers, jurists, and policy makers have abandoned those concerns. If that second factor may be characterized as scholarly inertia, a third factor is surely scholarly thoroughness. There is a sense abroad in academe that Reconstruction scholarship, like the Second Reconstruction to which it was a handmaiden, must move on to new insights that go well beyond the now old-fashioned attempt to prove that Reconstruction was not as bad as most white Americans used to think.

LaWanda Cox, with her late husband John, wrote one of the



From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 1. When Union forces arrived in Louisiana, Lincoln had his first big chance to reconstruct a state.



*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURE 2. Some New Orleans residents scrambled to take the oath of allegiance to the United States.

1960s' most important and influential works on Reconstruction, *Politics, Principle, and Prejudice, 1865-1866: Dilemma of Reconstruction America*, a book which did much to destroy Andrew Johnson's reputation. Mrs. Cox was already a mature scholar at the advent of the heyday of Reconstruction studies. Her interest in the subject endures because of essentially scholarly impulses. In her long career, she came across documents which did not seem to jibe with the accepted wisdom on Abraham Lincoln's Reconstruction policies, and she wanted to figure out what was correct.

In one respect, but in one respect only, her conclusions are not original. She shares with McCrary and other scholars a view, fast gaining wide acceptance among historians, that Abraham Lincoln would have reconstructed the South had John Wilkes Booth not stopped him. In light of the preponderance of evidence in favor of this view — one thinks immediately of the numerous Lincoln letters urging military governors in the South to get on with the work of reconstructing their states — the conclusion may seem obvious and banal. A quick glance at the conclusions reached by the previous generation of historians like Allan Nevins and James G. Randall, will quickly reveal the unanimity of the contrary opinion until very recent times. And outside the scholarly community, the older view still reigns supreme and shows few signs of movement toward the newer view. It will require many more reiterations than Mrs. Cox's to turn the tide of majority opinion, and there is nothing wrong with her reasserting this truth.

The real originality of *Lincoln and Black Freedom* lies in the nature of Mrs. Cox's proof of the proposition that Lincoln would have reconstructed the South had he lived to complete his second term. Readers of McCrary's book in particular will be surprised to see who Mrs. Cox's heroes and villains are. The reader should not be fooled by her assertion that her approach in the book was "one of reflection rather than research." She has solid documentation for her most important conclusions. She

read the crucial documents and, more important, read them with care and with discerning and sympathetic intelligence. It is a convincing book.

The care with which Mrs. Cox read the documents is apparent in her first chapter. Relying for the most part on documents read by hundreds of historians before her, she manages nevertheless to describe Lincoln's policies toward slavery in a fresh and exciting way:

When war opened possibilities unapproachable in the 1850s, Lincoln's reach was not found wanting. Indeed, there is something breathtaking in his advance from prewar advocacy of restricting slavery's spread to foremost responsibility for slavery's total, immediate, uncompensated destruction by constitutional amendment. The progression represented a positive exercise of leadership. It has often been viewed as a reluctant accommodation to pressures; it can better be understood as a ready response to opportunity. Willing to settle for what was practicable, provided it pointed in the right direction, Lincoln was alert to the expanding potential created by war. Military needs, foreign policy, Radical agitation did not force him upon an alien course but rather helped clear a path toward a long-desired but intractable objective. Having advanced, Lincoln recognized the danger of a forced retreat, a retreat to be forestalled with certainty only by military victory and constitutional amendment. His disclaimer of credit for "the removal of a great wrong" which he attributed to "God alone," though in a sense accurate, for the process of emancipation did not follow his or any man's design, was nonetheless misleading.

Although historians have often remarked on Lincoln's "growth" in office, none has heretofore called the rapidity of change in his views on slavery "breathtaking."

Can Mrs. Cox document it? In a word, yes. She notes that Lincoln was the first President ever to ask Congress to pass an amendment to the Constitution fully drafted by the President

himself (in December, 1862). "Lincoln took the initiative against slavery," she says. When he had first suggested his scheme for gradual and compensated emancipation in the border states the previous March, "Congress had not yet taken any action against slavery as such." The first Confiscation Act (August, 1861) affected only slaves used for military purposes, and the bill to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia had not yet passed either house. Even Wendell Phillips had to admit that Lincoln was "better than his Congress fellows." The Phillips letter came to light only in 1979. Mrs. Cox has been reading as well as reflecting.

Mrs. Cox's interpretation of the Emancipation Proclamation likewise gives firm support for her use of the word "breath-taking":

In issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln is sometimes seen as lagging behind Congress, which had passed the Second Confiscation Act on July 17, 1862. Yet the first draft of his proclamation was presented to the cabinet just five days later and his decision had been made earlier, at least by July 13 — that is, before Congress acted. When his advisers convinced him to delay until a Union victory, Lincoln promptly issued the first paragraph of his draft as a separate proclamation giving warning that all persons who did not return to their allegiance would be subject, as provided by the Confiscation Act, to forfeitures and seizures.

The discerning intelligence with which Mrs. Cox read the documents is everywhere apparent. She knows that tone is

important. In discussing Lincoln's message on compensated emancipation of the spring of 1862, she notes that in "earnestly beg[ing] the attention of Congress and the people," he "rejected the suggestion that he substitute 'respectfully' for 'earnestly.'" He pleaded for his program "in full view of my great responsibility to my God, and to my country." Mrs. Cox adds shrewdly: "In this first major antislavery document of his presidency the word order of 'God' and 'country' may be not unworthy of note." Lincoln was honest, but he was also crafty, as Mrs. Cox knows from her sensitive reading of his works. When rumors that Confederate peace commissioners were coming to Washington threatened passage of the Thirteenth Amendment in the House early in 1865, James Ashley asked the President for a denial.

Pressed, Lincoln sent a one-sentence, carefully phrased response: "So far as I know, there are no peace commissioners in the city, or likely to be in it." Peace commissioners, as Lincoln well knew, were on their way — but to Fortress Monroe rather than to "the city."

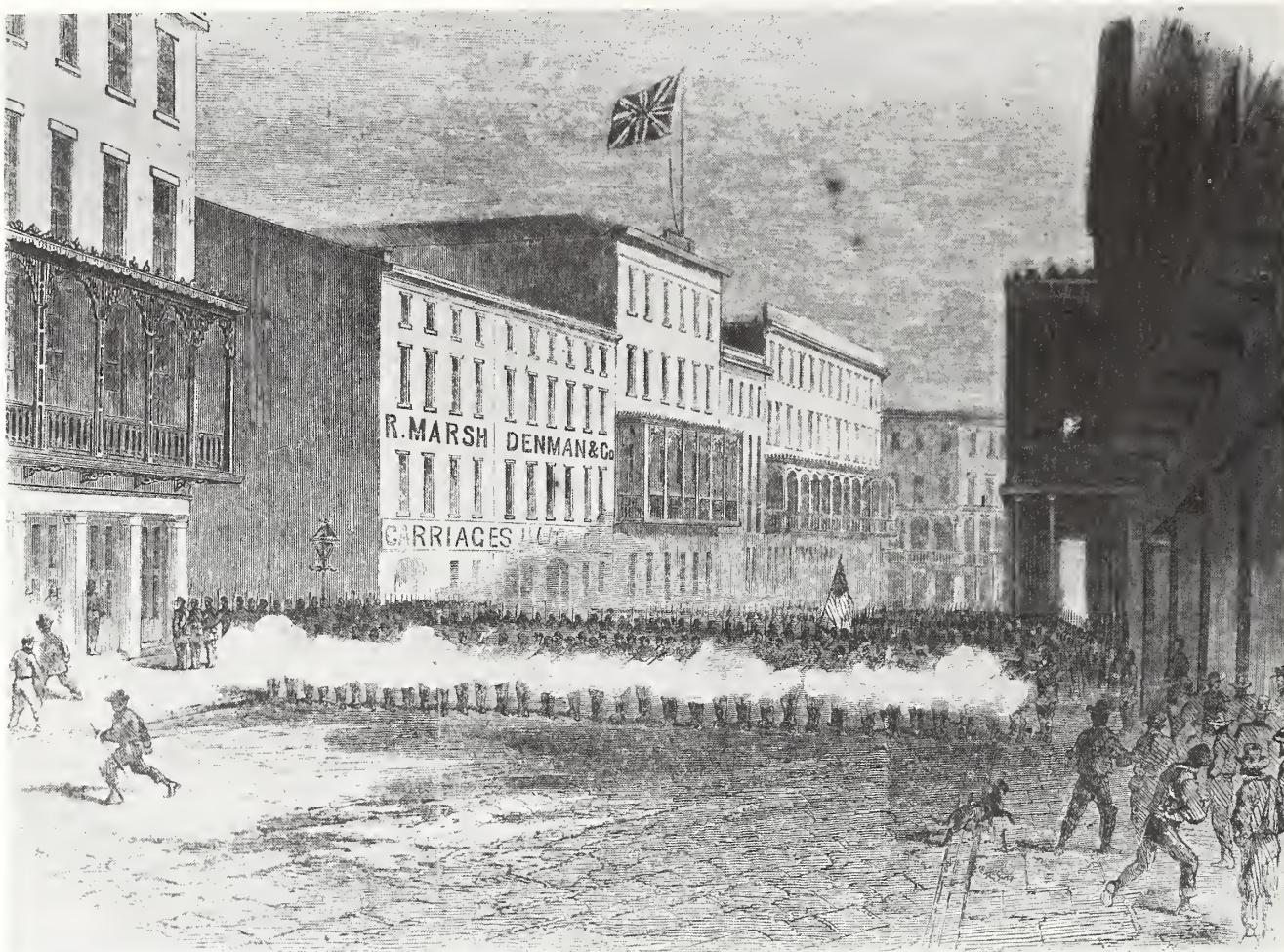
Lincoln and Black Freedom is a book for aficionados who will appreciate the subtle interpretations and the careful attention to chronology.

When Mrs. Cox turns her formidable talents to the subject of Reconstruction in Louisiana, she reaches even more impressive and original conclusions. Her straightforward chronological approach allows her first to document Lincoln's education into the realities of disloyal sentiment in the South. Beginning with the notion that indigenous forces in occupied Louisiana could,



From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum

FIGURE 3. Union generals lectured Louisiana's blacks on their duties as freedmen.



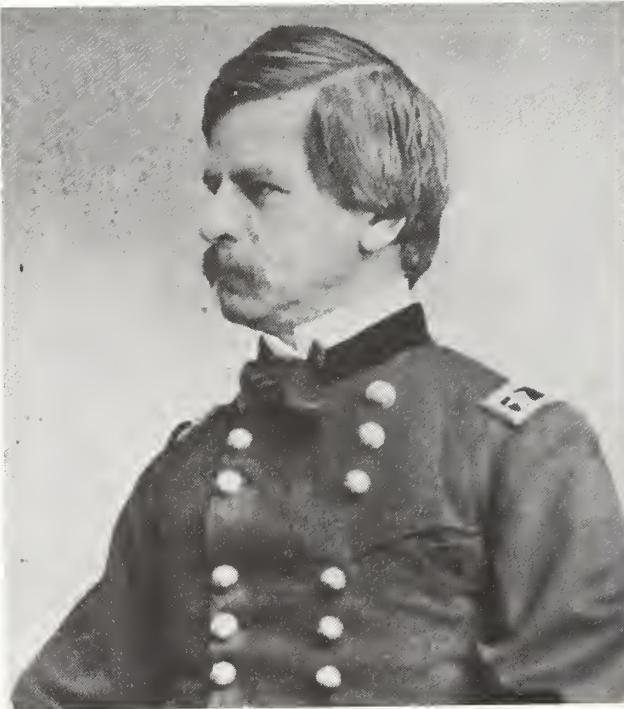
*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURE 4. Military power was much in evidence as Union soldiers practiced “street firing” in New Orleans.

with a little encouragement, create a new free state government, the President learned gradually that it could not be done — at least not before 1864, when the threat of Democratic control of the national government might end all efforts to undermine slavery. Slowly he came around to the view of General Nathaniel P. Banks, the Northern military commander in the region, that it could be done by means of military pressure without anything approaching a majority of the local population. That education informed Lincoln's general Proclamation of Amnesty and Reconstruction of December 8, 1863, which asked only for a ten percent nucleus around which to form a free state in any of the occupied South. Banks's idea, which soon became Lincoln's, was to organize elections for state offices under the old prewar proslavery constitution and declare the parts of that constitution upholding slavery null by sheer military authority. It would take too long to wait for majority opinion even among the loyal people of Louisiana to come around to the conviction that slavery should be abolished in a new state constitution.

Readers of Peyton McCrary's *Abraham Lincoln and Reconstruction* will be surprised to hear of this concurrence of views between Lincoln and General Banks. McCrary accused Banks of deceiving Lincoln into thinking that the local antislavery loyalists, the Free State Committee led by Thomas J. Durant, were dragging their feet in registering voters for a constitutional convention. Banks, McCrary argued, gained control of the political situation in Louisiana and engineered a conservative “coup” which undermined the more radical Free State movement. As Mrs. Cox points out, however, it was a long letter from Durant to Lincoln (October, 1863) which revealed to the President that little or nothing was being done in Louisiana.

(To be continued)



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FIGURE 5. General Nathaniel P. Banks.



Lincoln Lore

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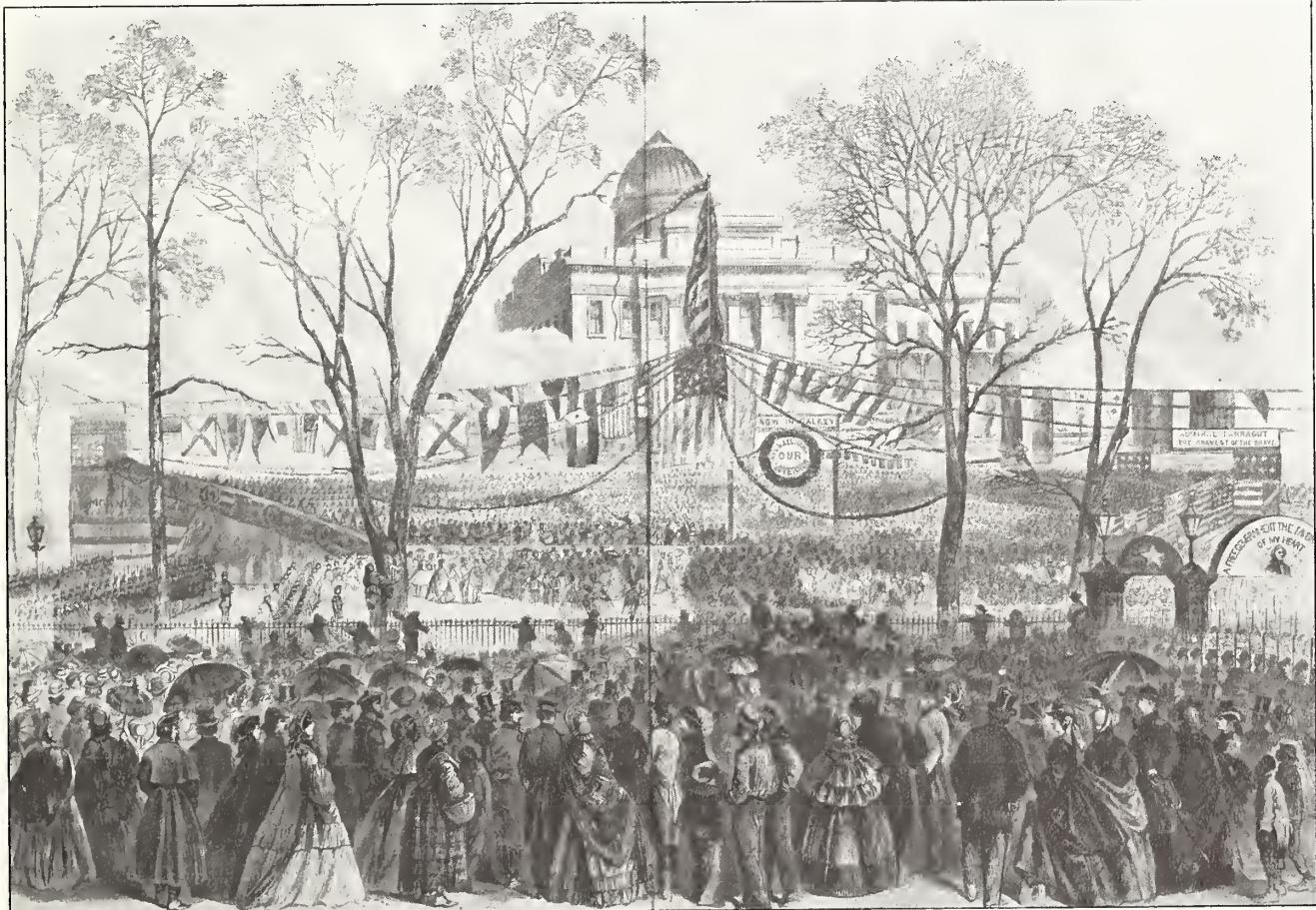
LAWANDA COX ON RECONSTRUCTION IN LOUISIANA: A REVIEW (Cont.)

The President then blamed Banks for the lack of progress, and the general, whose military duties kept him from seeing Lincoln's letter until December 2nd, did not get around to defending himself until December 6th. Banks said, and it was true, that he had no orders authorizing him to take charge of the political situation. Since word that it would take a long time to organize a constitutional convention in Louisiana came from Durant himself, it is little wonder that Lincoln turned to Banks and sustained him, as Mrs. Cox argues, when he differed with Durant and the Free State movement.

Mrs. Cox's understanding of the situation in Louisiana is markedly different from McCrary's. In her book, Banks is depicted as leading a temporarily successful Unionist move-

ment in Louisiana fully in keeping with the President's wishes. In his book, Banks is depicted as the President's deceiver. In Mrs. Cox's work, Durant appears as a difficult stumbling block to progress toward the goal of making Louisiana a free state before adverse political developments in 1864 could undermine the work. In Mr. McCrary's work, Durant appears as a man thoroughly wronged by Banks and a President working under false assumptions about political reality in Louisiana.

Mrs. Cox wins this argument hands down. Durant chose to make his name in history by opposing the Lincoln-Banks government and by claiming that it was engineered to undermine the radical Free Staters' desire to urge suffrage for Negroes in Louisiana. *Lincoln and Black Freedom* shows that in fact



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FIGURE 1. Governor Michael Hahn's inauguration in New Orleans, March 4, 1864.



*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURE 2. Mrs. Banks sponsored a splendid entertainment on election day in Louisiana.

the President, Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase, and Durant himself were, in the beginning, all in agreement on the suffrage issue. All three were committed to registering freeborn black citizens, principally the New Orleans Creoles.

Durant had not gone farther than that in urging black suffrage by February, 1864. And Lincoln had already gone that far. He had twice approved registration of freeborn Negroes as voters in Louisiana. Lincoln approved Secretary of War Edwin M. Stanton's order of August 24, 1863, telling the military governor in Louisiana to register "all the loyal citizens of the United States" there. Chase had objected to the first draft of the order, which stipulated organizing a constitutional convention based on the white population. The final order stipulated "loyal" citizens rather than "white" citizens. "For the instructions," Chase said, "we are indebted to Mr. Stanton and the President." In the following November, Chase had to write to urge Durant, in charge of the voter registration, to register Negro citizens. Durant replied that he favored it himself, but it would be helpful to have specific directives from Washington. Chase went to Lincoln. "I informed the President of your views on this subject," Chase told Durant on December 28, 1863, "and he said he could see no objection to the registering of such citizens, or to their exercise of the right of suffrage."

Banks ruined this hopeful unanimity of opinion on a delicate subject by opposing any black suffrage. He feared that the issue would divide Southern loyalists and endanger the abolition of slavery by the new state government. The split in the Louisiana loyalists which followed was Banks's fault, as McCrary and Cox both agree, but it was also Durant's fault. In a huff over Banks's assumption of power in Louisiana at the President's direction, he chose not to discuss and compromise but to fight the Banks government to the bitter end.

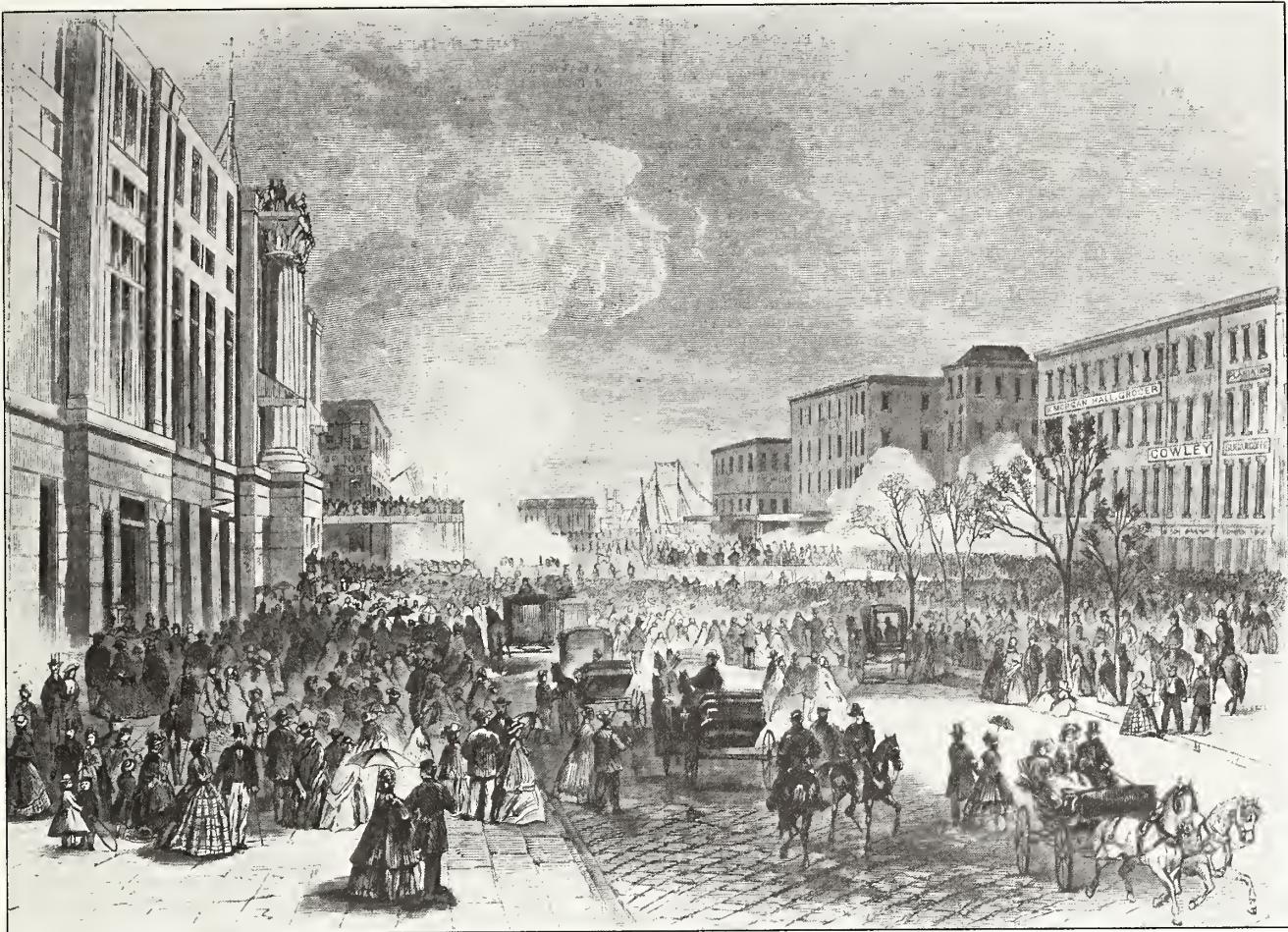
That opposition, combined with the suspicions of the radical

antislavery men that Lincoln was not radical enough to suit them, eventually doomed the Louisiana experiment. Banks, a political general if there ever was one, proved to be politically inept. Mrs. Cox describes the demise of the experiment with equally convincing attention to close reading of the documents and careful chronology. In sum, there is a great deal more in the book than can be described within the confines of this review.

If there is a significant flaw in *Lincoln and Black Freedom*, it is an error of omission rather than one of commission. Mrs. Cox tends to be a bit skimpy on biography. With as famous a figure as Lincoln, this is no problem. In his case she very properly focuses on the particular problem and aims at straightening out the reader's understanding of Lincoln's role in it.

With Nathaniel P. Banks, Mrs. Cox's failure to provide a wider biographical focus is more problematic. "The fate of Lincoln's free state," she says accurately, "suggests the vulnerability of presidential purpose and power to ineptitude of execution, the obstinacy of human nature, and misperceptions fired by the passion of great ends linked to personal conceits." She documents Lincoln's purpose in the Louisiana experiment better than anyone has ever done before. She finds the important instances of ineptitude. She describes Durant's obstinacy in unforgettable terms. She shows the vital links between personal conceits and conflicts over national policy. Yet Banks's inept policies are central to the story, as is his obstinacy and his conceit. They are as central as Lincoln's purposeful leadership, but they are not as well described.

Mrs. Cox realizes that Banks was too optimistic. When he told Lincoln that reconstructing Louisiana as a free state would be no more difficult than "the passage of a dog law in Massachusetts," Banks made one of the worst predictions in American history. Thirteen years of Federal occupation and struggle — some of it bloody — followed Banks's assumption of political control in Louisiana. There was special irony, as she points out,



*From the Louis A. Warren
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FIGURE 3. While Louisiana's loyal citizens voted, a military band played in Canal Street. It was George Washington's Birthday, and the occupying troops marked the anniversary with patriotic fervor.

"in the political general failing to be politic." She shows very well what went wrong in Louisiana, but she does not say why Banks erred. There was the factor of his gross optimism, of course, but why was he so optimistic?

Only biography can tell, and the problematic nature of Banks's conception of the Louisiana experiment seems glaring enough to demand more attention to his biography. Advising President Lincoln on Louisiana policy in 1863, Banks said:

Offer them a Government without slavery, and they will gladly accept it as a necessity resulting from the war. Other questions relating to the condition of the negro, may safely be deferred until this one is secured. If he gains freedom, education, the right to bear arms, the highest privileges accorded to any race and which none has yet proved itself worthy unless it be our own, his best friend may rest content for another year at least.

In January, he told Lincoln that the government he was creating in Louisiana with the help of Federal bayonets would provide "for the gradual restoration of power to the people" but "in such manner as to leave the control of affairs still in the hands of the commanding General." When Louisiana citizens elected Michael Hahn governor, they "understood . . . that Mr. Hahn represents a popular power entirely subordinate to the armed occupation of the state for the suppression of the rebellion and the full restoration of the authority of the government." "The election perilled nothing," Banks told the President — "Had it resulted in the election of an opponent, he would be without power." When Louisiana's new constitution abolished slavery in September, Banks crowed: "History will record the fact that all the problems involved in restoration of States . . .

have already been solved in Louisiana with a due regard to the elevation of the black and security of the white Race."

Such optimism seems glaringly wrong in the light of subsequent events in Louisiana, but it is more than "twenty-twenty hindsight" that makes the error clear. Foresight at the time surely demanded that General Banks ask what would happen when the Federal troops left. Would the Negro's advance, left to the future, occur then? When the Confederates returned, the opposition would surely win elections. Would the opponents be powerless then? To be sure, Banks's statements were meant to let Lincoln know that the military would not allow a disloyal government to rule if the Unionists lost in 1864, but should not even that mention of the subject have caused Banks to wonder about 1865 or 1866?

Banks was sanguine. He would let the future take care of itself. His government would satisfy the abolitionists for another year (he thought, wrongly), and that was all that concerned him. Banks lived day to day, so to speak, but he also thought that his work in Louisiana guaranteed him immortal fame. "History" would record his deeds. He was conscious of history. He was thinking about what would be said of his Louisiana government in the long run, but he had no long-range plan. Why not?

It is impossible to tell for certain, but a look at the general's career before the Louisiana experiment offers at least one enticing clue. General Banks's first command was the Department of Annapolis. There, in 1861, he controlled the corridor from the Northern states to Washington, D.C. His headquarters was in Baltimore, and Banks "found the situation one of Southern hearts and Northern muskets," as his able biographer, Fred

Harvey Harrington, states. He tried to be conciliatory first, and secession sentiment soared. He was ordered to get tougher. Eventually, Banks's soldiers installed a pro-Union successor to the notoriously secessionist police marshal.

Banks then became the head of the Army of the Shenandoah, and more of Maryland came under his jurisdiction. On George B. McClellan's orders, he arrested secessionist members of the Maryland legislature on their way to Frederick for a special session. His soldiers "protected" the polls, as pro-Union forces swept to victory in the autumn elections.

In later years, Banks would boast that his administration of Maryland was a model for Reconstruction:

The secession leaders — the enemies of the people — were replaced and loyal men assigned to . . . their duties. This made Maryland a loyal State. . . . What occurred there will occur in North Carolina, in South Carolina, in Georgia, in Alabama and Mississippi. If . . . those States shall be controlled by men that are loyal . . . we shall then have loyal populations and loyal governments.

The Maryland experience helps to explain Banks's optimism.

As was more often the case than has been commonly recognized in the study of Reconstruction, such optimism was rooted in a particular analysis of Southern society. The analysis perhaps came easier to former Democrats (like Banks), who were used to invoking a form of class analysis in their prescriptions for political policy. It may have come easier as well to a politician of working class origins (like Banks, the "Bobbin Boy of Massachusetts"). Banks vowed to build a loyal Louisiana out of the "humble and honest farmer, the poor mechanic, the hard-

working classes, the bone and sinew of the land." It will not do to dismiss such statements as the rhetorical litany of American politicians. Banks had blamed secession on a tiny elite of rich planters and a Southern urban aristocracy. He thought that a "clear majority of the people were . . . opposed to the war and could you remove from the control of public opinion one or two thousand in each of these States . . . you would have a population in all of these States . . . loyal and true to the Government."

General Banks may have been inept, but his miscalculations were born of practical experience in Maryland and of assumptions about the social composition of Southern society. His conceit stemmed from memories of his role in one of the North's two big political successes early in the war, the retention of Maryland in the Union. His obstinacy in pursuing his political plan was rooted in a fairly systematic political philosophy which told him what Southern society was like. The deeper roots of the ineptitude, conceit, and obstinacy of the other characters in the Louisiana experiment likewise demand study.

There are limits to what any one historian can do. Mrs. Cox has done more than most. One need only think of the muddled state of scholarship on early Louisiana Reconstruction before her work — and that of McCrary and other recent scholars as well — to be grateful for the modern accomplishments in this field.

On February 10, 1982, the Civil War Round Table of New York City gave LaWanda Cox the Barondess/Lincoln Award for *Lincoln and Black Freedom*. She deserved it. Her book is a contribution to Lincoln scholarship that will last.



*From the Louis A. Warren
Lincoln Library and Museum*

FIGURE 4. A photographer in New Orleans, E. Jacobs, took a picture of Banks and his staff in the spring of 1864. This woodcut was copied from it.

Look for Your Answer Here

Acts Passed to Compensate Slave Owners.

Recommended by President Lincoln.

"Will you please settle an argument? A says that Abraham Lincoln proposed a settlement to the south on the slave question to avoid bloodshed. B says Lincoln never made such a proposition. If A is right, what terms did Lincoln propose?" M. E. On July 14, 1862, President Lincoln sent the following message to Congress:

"Fellow citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives: Herewith is the draft of a bill to compensate any state which may abolish slavery within its limits, the passage of which, substantially as represented, I respectfully and earnestly recommend."

In compliance with Lincoln's request the following bill was passed: "Resolved, that the United States ought to co-operate with any state which may adopt gradual abolition, giving to such state pecuniary aid, to be used by such state in its discretion to compensate for the inconveniences, public or private, produced by such change in system."

President Lincoln proposed that the government pay \$400 each, or a total of \$170,000 for the freedom of the slaves in the state of Delaware, which remained loyal to the Union, but the offer was rejected by that state's Legislature. Similar offers were made to other states, but none of them took any official action.

But no such offer was made to the Confederate states so long as they remained in what was regarded as rebellion. President Lincoln did recommend, however, in December, 1862, that Congress propose an amendment to the Constitution providing "compensation in bonds for every state which should abolish slavery before the year 1800." The slave states never accepted the offer and the matter was dropped.

In the same year Congress passed a bill for the immediate abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia which provided compensation to slave owners not to exceed \$300 for each slave. An act approved Feb. 21, 1864, allowed a compensation of \$300 to the owner of each Negro taken into the federal military service.

Comp. value Estimate

81. [ABRAHAM LINCOLN.] Ms. Document relating to the claim of J.H. Maddox for compensation. 11 pp., folio. Maddox states that he first suggested Lincoln's plan to purchase all slaves. Also, 2 printed senate reports on the Maddox claim and a statement by the Treasury Dept. that the claim for tobacco losses had been paid. 20.00

autographs Retyl + Sonni [9] no date or no.

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